



# MARTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Martock Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 in the Parish Hall, Church Street, Martock at 7:00pm.

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**PRESENT:** Councillors John Hole (Chair), Joy Bailey (Deputy Chair), Ashley Chapman, Paul Helyer, Alan Potter, Alison Warne, Ash Warne and Tony Welsh

**ALSO PRESENT:** Peter Finnis (Locum Clerk), Tracy Lamb (RFO) and Somerset Councillor John Bailey

## **Public participation time**

5 members of the public were in attendance.

Somerset Councillors Emily Pearlstone and John Bailey had previously submitted a report updating the Council on phosphate mitigation funding, recycling, road service repairs and improvements, and various local issues including Coat Grove matters, Stoke Road Industrial Estate pedestrian access, Martock Surgery, the formation of a new local traffic strategy group, Coat Road small drainage scheme, and works in Stapleton Close and Eastfield.

At the meeting, Somerset Councillor John Bailey alerted the Council that the Coat Road development was due to be considered again at Somerset's Planning Committee next week on the basis that a new flood report had been produced by the applicant's agent. The need for a co-ordinated local response at the meeting, similar to previously, was stressed and acknowledged. Councillor Bailey also lobbied the Council in respect of continued donations towards local library services and proposed an informal meeting of interested parties once the new Chief Executive was in post. This was accepted by the Chair whilst caveating it by stating that the 2024/25 budget needed to be set at this meeting.

Mr Keith Beatty and Mr Paul Harding addressed the Council as Chair of Trustees and Volunteer, respectively of the Youth Centre, registering concern at perceived uncertainty around the Council's future youth provision, and implications for the future use of the Youth Centre building. The Chair confirmed that Youth Provision was under review but that no decisions had yet been made and it was intended for the matter to come before the Council at its February meeting.

#### **001/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillor Graham Macdonald and Somerset Councillor Emily Pearlstone.

#### **002/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

#### **003/24 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

#### **004/24 COUNCIL BUDGET 2023/24 AS AT 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER (MONTH 9)**

Council considered the following reports from the RFO:

- (a) Detailed Income and Expenditure by Budget Heading.
- (b) Detailed Balance Sheet.
- (c) List of Payments for December 2023.
- (d) Virement Report,
- (e) Bank Reconciliation Statement.

**Resolved: (Unanimously)**

1. That the 2023/24 donation of £5,000 to Somerset Council for local library services be approved.
2. That the Virement report be approved.
3. That the RFO investigate and provide additional information to members in respect of the absence of income from the Farmers Market.
4. That the remaining reports all be noted.

#### **005/24 PROPOSED BUDGET AND SETTING OF THE PRECEPT FOR 2024/25**

The RFO submitted a proposed budget for 2024/25, having regard to current year spend, and identifying areas for unavoidable growth and efficiencies. The proposed core budget was in line with the draft budget approved by Council at its previous meeting. Council was also invited to consider setting aside a contingency fund as part of the overall budget to enable potential intervention in case of cuts to important local services that may be implemented by Somerset Council.

Council debated the budget in detail and a number of changes and amendments were considered and voted upon.

**Resolved: 1. (Unanimously)** That the proposed provision for a Pride Event be removed.

2. That movement of the cost code in respect of Defibrilators to the general budget cost centre be noted.
3. **(By 7 votes to 0 with 1 abstention)** That, subject to 1 and 2 above, the core budget for 2024/25 as proposed be approved.
4. **(By 5 votes to 4 on the casting vote of the Chair)** That a contingency sum of £50,000 in anticipation of the need to mitigate any significant local service cuts by Somerset Council, be approved and added to the core budget.

The effect of this being an overall increase in the Council's budget of 10.46% for 2024/25.

**5. (Unanimously)** That having regard to all of the above, the Council approves the setting of a Precept in the sum of £485,219 for 2024/25.

**Notes:**

1. A proposal to maintain previous annual donations of £5,000 towards local library services was rejected by 5 votes to 3.
2. A proposal to provide a contingency sum of £25,000 to mitigate any significant local service cuts by Somerset Council, the effect of which would be an overall increase in the Council's budget of 4.7% for 2024/25, was rejected by 5 votes to 4 on the casting vote of the Chair.
3. That a meeting will be arranged to further discuss local library services once the Council's new Chief Executive is in post, and that Council's representative at that meeting will be Councillor Joy Bailey.

**006/24 STAFFING AND OFFICE REVIEW**

The Locum Clerk submitted a report proposing that a review of the Council's staffing structure and office arrangements should be undertaken. Having already undertaken reviews of democratic arrangements and governance policies and with the impending arrival of the new Chief Executive, it was important to ensure that the Council's internal resources, systems and culture reflected its needs and priorities moving forward.

**Resolved: (Unanimously)**

1. That approval be given to undertake a staffing and office review in line with the proposed objectives set out in the report and that this review be led by the Council's new Chief Executive, assisted as required by the current locum clerk as part of transitional arrangements.
2. That, in conducting the Review, the need to align any future changes with options and implications around consideration of contract renewals and potential devolved Somerset services, be taken into account.
3. That the initial focus of the Review should focus on team culture and internal systems.

**007/24 MARTOCK ROVERS FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT**

Council considered a report of the Operations Manager on proposed arrangements for the 2024 tournament run by Martock Rovers (Junior) Football Club on 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> July at the Recreation Ground.

Previously, the Council had not charged for this event. However, last year, there were some issues, mainly litter, and required changes had been discussed with the organisers. Notwithstanding this, it was proposed that a nominal charge should be made in order to mitigate the Council's costs in respect of caretakers, cleaning, consumables, use of facilities pitches/toilets and extra bin collection.

**Resolved: (By 4 votes to 2 with 1 abstention)** That a charge of £100 be approved for this event.

### **008/24 MARTOCK BUS SHELTER PETITION**

Council received a local the petition, which had received 529 signatures, stating the following:

“To the community of Martock who we hope would be interested in having three bus shelters erected at suitable sites within the parish.

1. In front of the shopping precinct
2. Bower Hinton where the bus turns around
3. Marvin Close on the green opposite the vet’s surgery

Our one and only no.52 bus we want to keep. As in 2010 we had cutbacks and lost four buses and have not got them back yet. These buses were the medical bus, Taunton bus and 2 Nippy buses.”

**Resolved: (Unanimously) 1.** That the provision of new bus shelters be supported in principle, subject to suitability of location, and Somerset Council’s ability to provide and maintain them.

**2.** That the petition be referred to Martock’s Somerset Council representatives.

### **009/24. FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

(a) Planning and Highways Committee – Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7.00pm.

(b) Council – Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7.00pm.

**Noted.**

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

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**Chair**

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**Date**